

Congressman Christopher H. Smith
Statement on H.Res.860 World Cup and Trafficking Resolution

One of the tragedies of modern day slavery is that so much of the demand for trafficking comes from countries that espouse commitment to human rights. As the world watches the 2006 FIFA World Cup, a showcase of world-class athleticism and teamwork, Germany, despite its professed commitment to fight the abuse and exploitation of women and girls through trafficking, by certain policies is facilitating or encouraging the very crime it professes to abhor.

In December 2001 the German government legalized prostitution, which is not only inherently harmful and dehumanizing, but it also fuels trafficking because it provides a façade behind which traffickers for sexual exploitation operate. Legalization of prostitution also places a greater burden on law enforcement as officials try to distinguish legal pimps from human traffickers.

According to the U.S. State Department, where prostitution is legalized or tolerated, there is a greater demand for human trafficking victims and nearly always an increase in the number of women and children trafficked into commercial sexual slavery. Major sporting events and conventions attract large numbers of people and also have been proven to result in an increase in the demand for commercial sexual services. Pimps and traffickers jump to respond to the demand by trafficking women and girls for prostitution to events, such as the World Cup.

In Germany there are more than 400,000 women in prostitution, 75% of whom are foreigners. A 2001 report by the German Federal Criminal Investigation Office reported that of the 414 women and girls in prostitution that were surveyed, 45% were forced into prostitution through violence, torture, rape, or intimidation.

Further research conducted by Melissa Farley at Prostitution Research and Education found that 71% of women surveyed were physically assaulted while engaged in prostitution and a staggering 89% wanted to escape prostitution. Rather than preventing the abuse of women, the legalization of prostitution appears to condone an act that almost half the time will result in the physical abuse of a woman.

Regrettably, according to a 2003 UN report, Germany is the top destination country for trafficking in women and children for prostitution, with most victims trafficked from the former Soviet republics and Central and Eastern Europe. The German government should be outraged by this and immediately begin to look at their policies which make Germany such an inviting country for traffickers.

In 1993, there were 517 cases of illegal sex slave trade; in 2003, the number of identified victims was 1,235. Although specific statistics aren't available, a recent UN report estimates the number of forced laborers in Germany to be anywhere from 2,000 – 20,000. Most of these are women from Eastern Europe who were forced into prostitution.

The link between legalization of prostitution and trafficking was recognized in the U.S. State Department's 1999 Country Report on Human Rights Practices, released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. In the country report on Australia, it was noted that in the State of Victoria which legalized prostitution in the 1980s, "Trafficking in East Asian women for the sex trade is a growing problem" in Australia. "...lax laws – including legalized prostitution in parts of the country – make [anti-trafficking] enforcement difficult at the working level." In order for the German government to successfully combat trafficking in persons it must reverse the legalization of prostitution.

The European Union has also expressed concern that the legalization of prostitution in Germany provides an atmosphere for World Cup fans to legally rape women in brothels or in mobile units designed for quick and discrete entrances and exists for the rapists. Europeans and Americans are not the only ones watching in horror as Germany potentially plays host to human traffickers. Vivi Akakpo, the West African coordinator for the All Africa Conference of Churches said, "It is now public knowledge that organized syndicates have plans to bring in young women, particularly from Eastern Europe and from other poor countries, to Germany in time for the World Soccer Cup 2006."

While I welcome the recent ratification by the German government of the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, as my amendment states, such actions are only a necessary first step in combating trafficking in persons in Germany.

This resolution encourages the German government to implement the protocol as soon as possible.

This legislation, which has 30 cosponsors, also calls for fans, players, and all citizens to boycott the Brothels and calls on the government of Germany to take immediate action to halt state sponsorship of commercial sexual exploitation that leads to sex trafficking of women in connection with the World Cup games.

The many athletes and coaches of teams that will play in the World Cup can be a voice for the voiceless and should denounce Germany's complicity in sex trafficking. Sponsors of the World Cup should also join in the efforts to end the sexual exploitation of women and girls and prevent trafficking in human beings.

All those who support the dignity of women should demand strong and immediate actions by the German government to reverse its facilitation of sex trafficking. I ask my colleagues to give favorable consideration to H. Res. 860, which is a very timely and necessary statement to our colleagues in Germany that it is their responsibility to fully comply with the spirit of anti-trafficking efforts and reverse its pro-commercial sex laws.